DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 794 CG 025 114

AUTHOR Dugan, Willis E.
TITLE Wood Block and Toy Project. Designed for Diversely-Abled Senior Volunteers.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 62p.; A product of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in cooperation with the Whitney Senior Center, St. Cloud, MN.
AVAILABLE FROM RSVP Woodblock and Toy Project, City Hall, 40 South Second St., St. Cloud, MN 56301 ($10).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Day Care; *Frail Elderly; Institutionalized Persons; *Nursing Homes; *Older Adults; *Physical Disabilities; *Volunteers

ABSTRACT

This document describes a volunteer work project designed for nursing home and day-care center persons with minimal physical skills. Potential users of the project are cautioned to plan carefully for the host location where the project will be conducted, as the location must be easily accessible to older adults who may be handicapped and who may require transportation by agency vans or special buses. Users also are advised to provide attentive and caring supervision. The history of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Woodblock and Toy Project is briefly reviewed, as is the role of the senior center in St. Cloud, Minnesota that shared its woodworking shop as a host and co-sponsor of the project. There are three major sections of this document. The first focuses on the nature and organization of the project and includes orientation suggestions. The second section concentrates on operational suggestions. This section discusses how to finance the project; how to obtain or make necessary materials, including scrap lumber, wheels, cloth pouches for the woodblocks, and child safe paints; how to store and inventory the products; how to distribute the products; and rewards for volunteers. The third section of the document includes descriptions, diagrams, and dimensions for basic woodblocks; a variety of cars and trucks; rainbow stacking rings; flip-flop pounding toys; and a mini-train set. Photographs and news stories pertaining to the project are appended. (NB)

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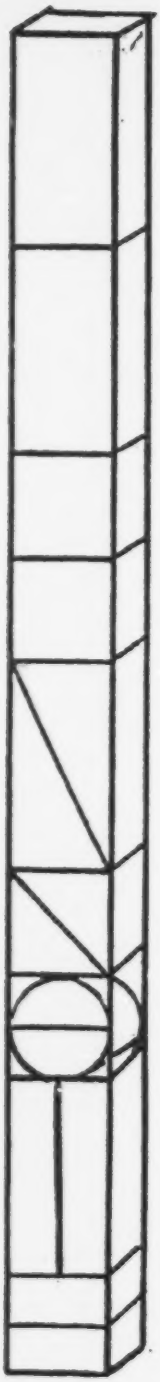

RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
RSVP
A COMMUNITY OF TALENTS SERVING YOU
A PART OF ACTION

Wood Block and Toy Project

Designed for Diversely-Abled Senior Volunteers

Willis E. Dugan
RSVP Volunteer Project Supervisor

Bill Dugan
11-2-93

In Cooperation with
THE WHITNEY SENIOR CENTER
St. Cloud, Minnesota

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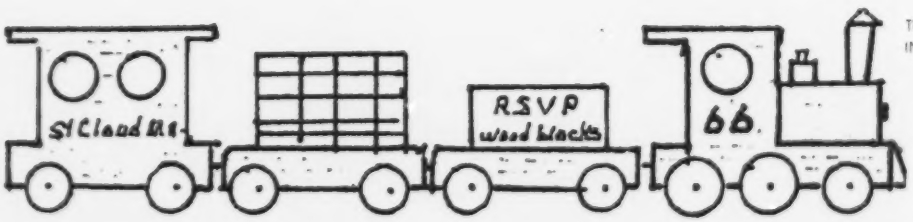

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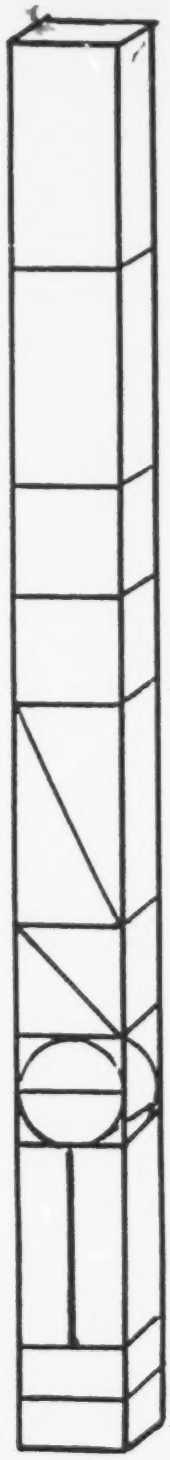

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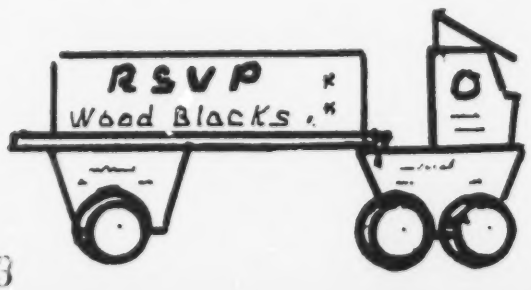

RSVP

RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Sharing The Experience Of A Lifetime

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400 South Second St.
St. Cloud, MN 56301
(612) 252-0343

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Graphics and photography by the author.

Published by the Retired Senior Volunteer Program
St. Cloud, Minnesota

Senior Center Activity Workshops, RSVP Volunteer Work Stations, community agencies, educational institutions, and other volunteer persons who wish to secure copies of this MANUAL for a nominal charge should write or call:

RSVP Woodblock & Toy Project
City Hall, 400 South Second Street
St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301
Telephone: (612) 252-0343 or
FAX: (612) 255-7297

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AN OVERVIEW AND ORIENTATION

This volunteer work project is especially designed for nursing home and day-care center persons with minimal physical skills. It is aimed at helping older persons who are frail or have physical limitations to express their interests and talents by engaging in a useful, productive activity.

The minimal physical skills required are hand-sanding and painting of woodblocks in a comfortable setting apart from their usual and somewhat restricted daily lifestyle.

Initiating this project requires establishment of a cooperative working relationship with care centers and the work center which serves as the host for the project.

Plan carefully for the host location where the project may best be conducted. The host facility should be easily accessible to those who must be transported by agency vans or public buses which are handicap-accessible.

A leader-supervisor must be selected with certain organizing and woodworking skills to oversee not only the dynamics of the group work sessions, but also, the preparatory and post-session responsibilities that inevitably accompany the project's successful operation.

A comfortable work space with large tables and chairs for sedentary activity may be found in many different places, e.g., a church basement, a school lunchroom, in city hall, or more hopefully, in a senior center activity room or workshop.

Attentive and caring supervision is essential in helping elderly persons who have the physical limitations so often associated with aging. With these observations in mind, we offer to you some workable and practical suggestions based upon our experience.

Willis E. Dugan
RSVP Volunteer
Project Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sincere thanks are expressed to the scores of hard-working RSVP volunteers from area nursing homes and day centers who have contributed so much in the expression of their talents and skills in behalf of children in a wide range of community agencies and services. The thousands of colorful woodblocks and woodcrafted toys that you have made surely brighten the lives of those who were touched by your kindly efforts.

Thanks also to care-centers themselves and their hard-working activity leaders who accompanied their talented volunteers to the woodshop, tended their needs, and supervised many details in this caring enterprise.

Much appreciation also goes to the twenty or more RSVP production unit volunteers who worked so diligently in pre-session and post-session activities preparing the woodcraft materials used in the project. Others who deserve our thanks include the area lumber yards, cabinet shops and millwork factories in the area that contributed the much valued scrap lumber to our program.

The entire contingent of fifty or more volunteers in this cooperative project say thanks also to the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and the Whitney Senior Center, their staff leaders and supervisors, who have given strong support and encouragement to the Woodblock and Toy Project for more than a decade.

RSVP

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RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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ROLE OF RSVP

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Woodblock and Toy Project is an excellent example of how diversely abled senior volunteers may become active participants in a productive community enterprise.

About twelve years ago, in 1980, the Greater St. Cloud RSVP created the "woodblock project" to give nursing home residents (especially men) an opportunity to get involved with RSVP and assume a volunteer role outside of the nursing home setting. With the help of Whitney Senior Center which provided space in its woodshop, a volunteer with woodworking skills who pre-cut children's building blocks, and a Day-Care Center toy lending library which would receive the finished products, the concept became a reality. Soon several volunteers from three nursing homes came together twice a month and hand-sanded and painted the blocks. A few years later, RSVP contacted the Developmental Achievement Center and made this opportunity available to its senior citizen residents. In the past five years the project has grown and flourished.

Today, this unique senior volunteer project is a regularly scheduled program conducted at the Whitney Senior Center woodshop. Eighteen group work sessions are scheduled over the nine month work period from September to June. Activity supervisors from cooperating long-term care centers transport and accompany their volunteers to the woodshop.

RSVP provides an overall volunteer project supervisor to coordinate the planning and the work activities of over 40 volunteers, and Whitney Senior Center provides ample woodshop space and staff to assist in the effort.

In 1991, this volunteer project produced 585 woodcrafted toys and sets of colorfully painted wood blocks. These were distributed to needy children at the holiday season through community agencies such as the Women's Guild and the Salvation Army.

This volunteer project has enhanced the lives and life-adjustments of innumerable able-bodied and diversely-abled senior persons who have been given the opportunity to use their talents, skills and life experiences to help others. In the process, their own lives have been enriched and made happier.

This MANUAL has been prepared to share our experiences with other RSVP's and Senior Centers who may wish to emulate the program in their community.

Silvia Romanish, Director
Greater St. Cloud Retired
Senior Volunteer Program

REPLY TO Whitney Senior Center
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WHITNEY SENIOR CENTER
(612) 255-7245

ROLE OF SENIOR CENTER

The Whitney Senior Center has enjoyed the opportunity to share its Woodworking Shop as a host and co-sponsor of the RSVP Woodblock and Toy Project. This type of joint effort is indicative of what Senior Centers, RSVP and other agencies can do in cooperative efforts.

Our Senior Center Woodshop is designed as a fully equipped hobby shop where older adults may utilize their many creative interests and woodworking skills. The woodshop is used for a variety of projects including furniture repair and re-finishing, and the making of bookcases, end tables, bluebird houses, picture frames or toys for grandchildren.

Our modern woodshop has over 1600 square feet of space, plus an outside storage building for lumber. It has an ample supply of hand tools and power equipment to handle a variety of needs of people wanting to pursue woodworking as a hobby. Nearly two hundred people are approved to use the woodshop. Each new person is asked to read a woodshop information and safety manual. An average of ten people use the shop each day with women becoming increasingly involved in the program.

The woodshop is open five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Part-time supervisors are employed to oversee all woodshop activities, to assist shop users and to repair and

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maintain shop tools and equipment. Plans are underway to develop an introductory woodworking program as a way to involve new people.

The RSVP Woodblock Project is an important component of the woodshop. It offers volunteers of varying degrees of skill an opportunity to stay involved in the community and contribute to the needs of children in the area. Visitors to the woodshop are always interested in the many colorful and unique toys on display in the woodshop.

The Whitney Senior Center commends the Woodblock and Toy Project for the contribution it makes to the community and for the many purposes it serves. This descriptive manual should prove useful as a guide for other Senior Centers that may want to develop a similar community project.

Steve Hennes, Director
Whitney Senior Center
St. Cloud, Minnesota

SECTION I

NATURE AND ORGANIZATION OF PROJECT

The Woodblock and Toy Project is just what its name implies. Diversely-abled volunteers come to the senior center woodshop on scheduled days to help make sets of woodblocks and other toys for children.

Production is not the primary objective of this communal work activity for elderly persons. Some, quite obviously, are beset with the expected physical limitations of an older generation. However, the opportunity to break away from the usual daily routine of residential or day-care living may somehow brighten their day and add much to a healthier outlook on life.

All these volunteer participants have the time, talent, interests and life experience to make remarkably useful contributions to the community in which they live. The use of personal skills in sharing this work activity with others can and does enhance feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. The social interactions with elderly peers "on-the-job" with praise for work well-done, all contribute to a new sense of well-being and life satisfaction.

Research supports the salutary outcomes of group interaction programs for senior persons with time on their hands, and skills which need to be expressed. In short, projects of this type are exactly what retired senior volunteer programs are all about!

What began as a hobby activity for interested older persons developed into a regularly scheduled program sponsored cooperatively by RSVP and the Whitney Senior Center (WSC).

Eighteen group sessions are scheduled annually, meeting on the first and third Tuesday mornings of each month from September to June. These 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. sessions allow ample time for care center supervisors to transport their volunteers to the wood shop and to get them settled around large work tables. Careful attention must be accorded to those who use wheelchairs or walkers and a work table raised on blocks is helpful. Name badges and plastic work aprons are provided.

The spacious, well-lighted work room of WSC woodshop is completely reserved for this volunteer group on these two mornings. The woodshop is closed to public use and all power tools and equipment are shut down for safety purposes.

Close attention is given to supervisory assistance, because in some instances almost one-on-one supervision is necessary.

RSVP provides a Project Supervisor who attends each group session, plans the day's work activity, and provides a supply of woodblocks or toy parts to be sanded or painted.

Activity supervisors of cooperating care-centers sit down and work with their people and usually have another volunteer aide along to assist. Typically, six to eight supervisory helpers are present at each session. Two part-time WSC employees help set up the work space and the clean-up that follows. Special storage space is provided in labelled cartons of all work in progress.

TWO WORK UNITS

Two distinct groups of volunteer workers contribute to the overall operation of the Woodblock and Toy Project; namely, (1) group session volunteers and (2) production unit volunteers.

Group Session Volunteers

Care center volunteers may vary in number from 12 to 15 or up to as many as 25 or more depending upon arrangements made. These volunteers come only on the scheduled Tuesday mornings when ample supervision is available.

This group ranges from very active participants to less active. Some are recovering from health conditions requiring wheelchairs or other physical aids. Some are developmentally disabled seniors from a cooperative day center.

Nevertheless, all do participate and some stoutly express their interest and ability to contribute. Special clamps to securely hold woodblocks to the table are regularly provided for persons with limited physical mobility.

Attention span and physical limits may be reached earlier for some workers than for others. If so, they need only to get up and stretch for awhile, or to sit back and listen to the musical melodies of a volunteer accordion player who usually attends each group meeting.

Watch for signs of fatigue, lagging interest or comfort needs. It is helpful if supervisors work along with their volunteers to give praise and attention and to provide help as needed. Group sessions should be a friendly and happy time for everyone involved.

Production Unit Volunteers

Someone must cut out the rough blocks and toy parts for use in the group sessions. In fact, many pre-session and post-session chores are necessary to keep this project on target.

Another group of volunteers come to the woodshop on days and at hours convenient to them for a whole array of tasks supporting the project. Some are persons who regularly use the woodshop while others are especially

recruited because of special skills or interests. Tasks apart from the group sessions include:

- visiting lumber yards, cabinet shops or building sites to pick up supplies or scrap lumber.
- using power saws and other tools to cut woodblocks in the quantity needed.
- quality control painting--a final coat of paint on all woodblocks, toy cars, wagons, and wheels of many sizes.
- assembling toy cars and wagons and attaching wheels and axles.
- sorting and storing in cartons the materials in various stages of production, and keeping inventory.
- making draw-string cloth pouches at home by several RSVP women volunteers.
- sorting blocks by type early in December and packing them in cloth bags or wagons for final delivery to cooperating child-serving agencies or holiday distribution programs.

This production group of volunteers is somewhat younger in age and possess special skills for the tasks above.

ORIENTATION SUGGESTIONS FOR INITIATING PROGRAMS

START SMALL

- begin your woodblock project with only fifteen or twenty persons. Expand later.
- limit work activity at the beginning to woodblocks only for sanding and painting.
- cut woodblocks in the summer months to be ready for the start in September.
- woodblocks can be cut out anywhere--if the senior center does not have a

woodshop facility, e.g., a home workshop, a school shop, etc.

- a full year of lead time is required before full production is reached.

SUPERVISE

- choose a supervisor with organizing skills and some compassion or feeling for working with older and often disabled adults.

- insure that care center personnel accompany their people and continue to be fully accountable for their comfort needs, medication if necessary, and supervision of their work. Group activity sessions are not recess time for any supervisory personnel.

- provide name badges for everyone and call all participants by name while visiting or instructing.

- conduct an orientation-training session for all supervisors, aides and interns to explain how the project works and to receive "feed-back."

- provide a supervisory ratio of about one to every three senior volunteer workers in the group sessions.

- to accommodate volunteer workers in wheel chairs raise work table about four inches with blocks.

- provide special clamps on work tables for those who need blocks held in firm position.

- watch for signs of fatigue, boredom; or confusion about how to do the work; lack of enough materials to keep busy; or for personal comfort needs; especially, for those who are incontinent.

- keep inventory of woodblocks in various stages of completion in the work flow of the project. Provide plenty of storage room.

HAVE A PLAN

- every group session must be planned in advance. Supplies and work materials must be ready.

- eighteen two-hour group sessions from September to June require an overall schedule, a plan, and preparation of work materials and supplies.

- establish a budget and obtain financial support for essential supplies, e.g., paint, brushes, etc.

- cut out woodblocks in summer months using other woodshop volunteers.

- for a group of 15 to 20 workers, at least 200 blocks are needed for each group work session.

- alternate the work activity. Even elderly volunteers can become bored. This fact accounts for our adding other simple woodcrafted items like toy cars and trucks.

- enlist other RSVP volunteers to come on their own schedule to do quality-control painting, assembling wheels on cars and wagons; and in packing blocks in cloth bags for distribution.

- determine where the completed sets of blocks will be distributed; e.g., child-serving agencies, school kindergartens, Head Start, Woman House, and/or holiday toy distribution programs.

HAPPY WORK TIME

- group sessions should be a happy time! Give a friendly greeting to everyone when they arrive from their usual sheltered existence.

- show completed woodblock sets and toys so that everyone knows exactly what they are working on and how they are helping others.

- have music while they work. Enlist an RSVP concertina player to play lively music while they work.

- serve coffee, juices or water with donated cookies and goodies at the beginning of each group work session.

- always express and show your pleasure and your respect for these older persons who are giving their time and talent to a worthy cause.

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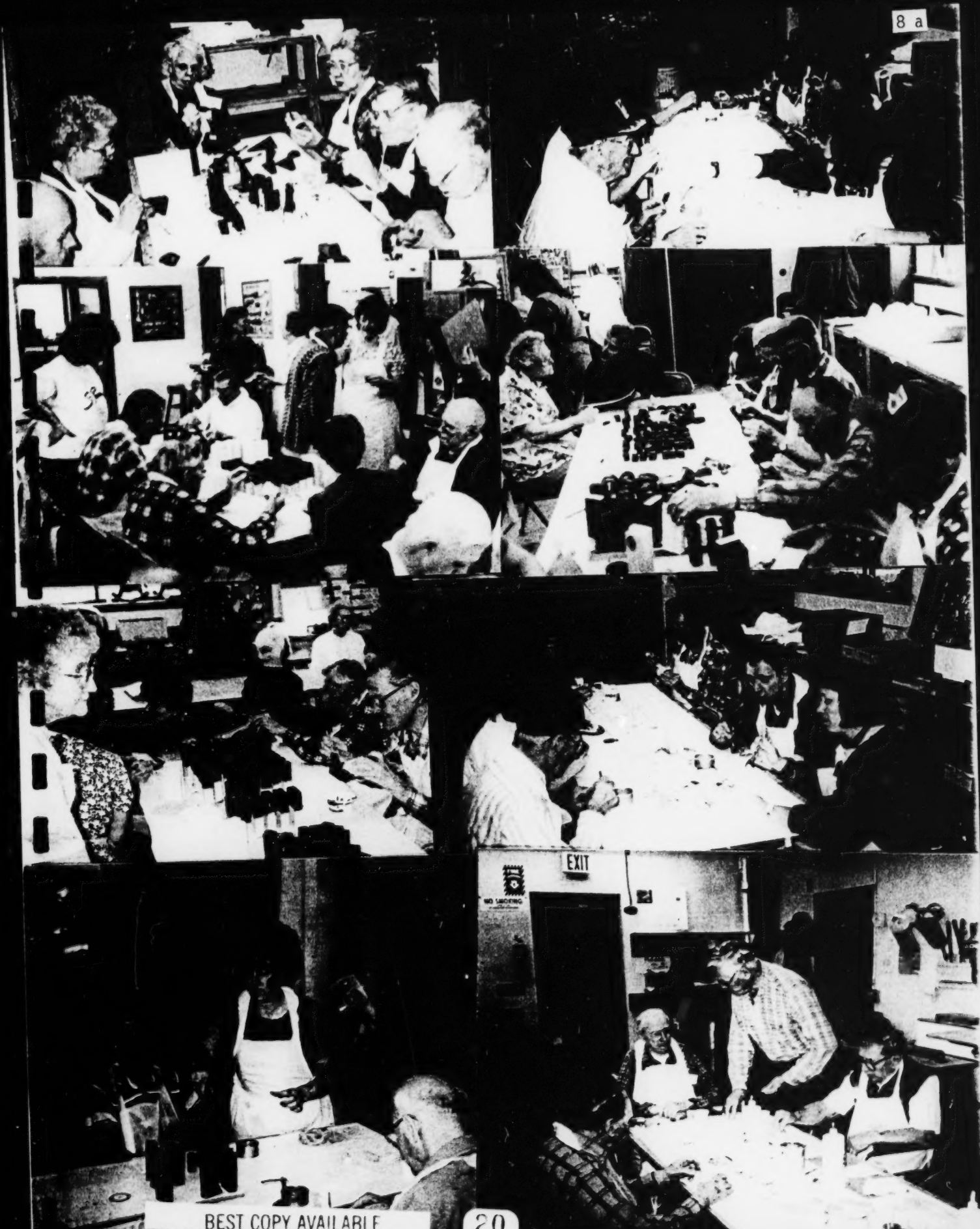

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SECTION II

SOME OPERATIONAL SUGGESTIONS

This section augments the earlier general orientation to the woodblock project. Now we deal with some of the basic questions of how to get this program off the ground and into action. Certainly you want some answers to questions such as:

- what will the project cost?
- where do you go for funding?
- where do you get all that scrap lumber?
- who makes those nice drawstring cloth pouches?
- why did you add sports cars, trucks and wagons?
- why do you need so many wheels?
- how about child safe paints?
- why is storage and inventory a problem?
- do we sell or give the woodblocks and toys away?
- what rewards are there for the volunteers?
- is there potential for gerontological research?
- can student interns learn from this experience?

Many of the answers to these pertinent questions will come to you with experience. Trial and error are great teachers as we soon discovered. Nevertheless, we offer a few ideas here from our experience. Five years ago we had 22 participants. Recently, when we counted, we found that we had 51 total volunteers last year. Of course, that includes all production unit helpers, the supervisors and some student interns from St. Cloud State University.

Just take off--help an "old-timer" have fun--BE HAPPY!

FINANCING THE PROJECT

A minimal budget is needed to finance the project. Perhaps $300 would take care of the materials and supplies which must be purchased each year.

RSVP provides the volunteers who comprise the group activity and the production unit. These volunteers contribute an average of 36 hours each during the eighteen sessions over nine months. Production unit volunteers who come to the woodshop at their own convenience devote variable amounts of time--ranging from one hour per month up to as high as ten or more hours per week. We estimate from RSVP time sheets that Woodblock project volunteers contribute approximately 2500 volunteer hours per year.

Care centers also make an investment of personnel time and other expense. Activity supervisors and often another aide accompany their people and provide transportation to the work center.

The Whitney Senior Center provides the facilities of its spacious, modern woodshop plus assistance of part-time supervisory personnel to set-up and clean-up the work space. In addition, we have use of an excellent array of power tools and equipment during the week plus the help of several wood-worker volunteers from among the regular membership of the woodshop. RSVP also recruits and trains several women volunteers who work at home cutting and sewing the draw-string cloth pouches used to contain a set of woodblocks.

Although scrap wood is predominantly used for the project, several other necessary materials must be purchased to keep the project functioning. These items include: latex enamel paint, in various colors; varnish, stains and woodsealers; wood screws and finishing nails; wood dowels in many sizes; thread, labels and draw-string cording for cloth pouches.

One senior service club has been graciously donating up to $400 per year (Golden Kiwanis); a major department store contributed a $250 Golden Rule award; several individuals have donated in cash and kind; RSVP and the local Women's Guild have also covered some expenses from their craft funds.

Some consideration has been given to offering some portion of the woodblock sets and other woodcraft toys to the general public for a donation to the RSVP craft fund. Many visitors to the woodshop offer to buy some of the items for use as gifts, particularly around the holiday season. So far no decision has been reached regarding gift shops or craft sales. Yet for some senior center volunteer programs this method of financing is a possibility.

SCRAP LUMBER SUPPLY

An active woodblock project such as described here could spend $1,000 or more each year for wood and lumber supplies.

Many sources of free scrap lumber are available. Check with all your local lumber yards, cabinet shops and millwork factories. They all have end-cut scrap lumber, closet pole ends or wood stair rail, 2 by 4's, 2 by 6's, etc., plywood and composition board and paneling in various dimensions. Call on them regularly and ask them to save such scrap for you. Many others also call on lumber yards for scrap to use as kindling--so be sure to make clear the worthwhile use that you will make of the material!

Scrap lumber will also be found at the building sites of new homes or other structures in your community. Ask permission to obtain that great variety of scrap treasures you can find here. Check with the on-site construction foreman or property owner for the privilege of picking up scrap that they might otherwise burn or throw away.

We found a maker of plaque awards who saved hundreds of 1 by 6 and 1 by 8 top-grade pine boards in lengths ranging from six inches to eighteen inches. These boards are 1 and 1/16th inches thick and are planed on all sides. They make a beautiful wood supply for toys particularly and also for the new size 2 1/2" by 5" woodblock we now make. This

special wood scrap costs us about $50 for a pick-up truck load, but it is much easier to handsand and paint.

Cabinet shops donate lots of scrap to the Whitney Senior Center woodshop lumber supply. A great variety of paneling from 1/4" to 3/4" comes from this source. This is perfect for wagon bases and many other toy items.

Scrap lumber supplies are like money in the bank to us.

WHEELS AND MORE WHEELS

Be prepared to cut out literally hundreds of wooden wheels in several different sizes. Sports cars, wagons, trucks and mini-trains take from four to six and even 18 wheels to get them moving. So be prepared. Locate a lot of capable woodshop volunteers who will help you cut out these wheels--and keep a plentiful supply on hand.

We have found the hole-saws used with the drill press are the fastest way to cut wheels with the standard 1/4" center hole. Most commonly needed sizes are 1 1/2" and 2" wheels cut from 1/2" plywood stock.

We pre-sand all plywood and composition board wheels carefully with the small one-inch belt sander so they have a smooth finish for painting. Some wheels we use in natural state, and others are stained or painted. We try to keep a supply of at least 400 wheels of each size on hand.

Attach wheels to cars, wagons and other toys with screws or with 1/4" dowel axles run through a 9/32nd" or 5/16th" axle hole. After all, a sports car should roll fast and easy.

Special wood axle pins can be purchased at craft stores if you can afford to fancy up your work. Also some fancy, smooth rounded wood wheels in various sizes can be purchased for 25¢ to 30¢ each. We prefer to make our own wheels.

CLOTH POUCHES FOR WOODBLOCKS

These ten to twelve inch square bags, pouches with a draw-string top, are ideal for containing a full set of 16 wood blocks. Some smaller pouches are also useful.

These pouches are sewed at home by RSVP volunteers from donated scrap materials from many sources. Colorful calicoes and blue denim are especially popular with those who sew the bags.

One lady who initiated the making of the bags held a training session for others who volunteered to make bags at home. We are not sure how they did it--but they made a beautiful bag with a square box-pleat on the bottom. We found that certain smooth drapery cording works best for the draw-string. We can use 150 bags each year.

A special cloth label "Made by RSVP Volunteers" is sewed on the face of each bag.

How to Make a Drawstring Cloth Bag:

Cloth bags with a draw-string top must be large enough to hold sixteen woodblocks. The scrap material often dictates whether the piece used will be cut 14" in width and 26" in length or somewhat smaller or larger in size. Not all the bags are exactly the same size.

First: hem the edges of the length of scrap with the inside out.

Second: hem a 24" piece of white cording into the top-side of the bag.

Third: with bag still inside-out, now sew across the bottom points of the bag to create a square bottom. Turn the bag inside-out and press the points flat inside the bag bottom. See diagram-photographs of cloth pouches.

Fourth: if you are still in doubt about your product consult an expert seamstress (see picture, page 16). Good Luck!

CHILD SAFE PAINT

Children who get to use our woodblocks and toys will usually find a way to put them in their mouths or chew on them. Consequently we are careful to select colorful paints with caution.

Typically, we use latex, water-based paints that are expressly recommended for use with children's toys. Fortunately, also, for our elderly volunteer painters the latex paints allow for easy clean-up with soap and water.

STORAGE AND INVENTORY

Even 1600 to 2400 rough-cut woodblocks demand a convenient storage place. During the ordinary nine-month work period, woodblocks will fall into at least four stages of development: rough, sanded, partially painted or fully painted. This is not at all inconvenient. It simply calls for some organized form of storage and frequent inventory--so you know where you are and how to plan for the next group session work.

Fortunately, WSC provides a special storage room in the woodshop just for RSVP supplies and materials. In addition, one long work bench has storage shelves under it for shop users to place "work in progress." Indeed, we make very good use of this storage space.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRODUCT

To whom should these RSVP senior volunteers give the product of their labors? Potential recipients of these colorful sets of woodblocks, toy sports cars and miniature flat-bed trucks are legion! Innumerable community and educational agencies are willing to offer financial aid and support to this project just for the opportunity of

receiving some of the toys for use within the agency. In addition to the usual holiday toy distribution programs, consider also such programs as HeadStart, children's libraries, Women's Shelters, the Legal Aid Society, the kindergarten and special education programs of the school system.

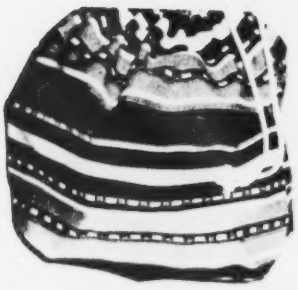
REWARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The greatest reward for the senior volunteers in this program is simply the opportunity to be a part of it! Here is one setting where elderly persons can come twice each month for a change of pace in their lives--and a chance to express and use the many skills and talents which they have to offer in behalf of others.

We find that the friendly recognition that comes with working with other people on a common cause has its own rewards. The atmosphere and social spirit of the group work sessions represents a bright spot in the day for both participant-volunteers and their supervisors.

The treats and refreshments provided at each work session allow time for visiting with others, listening to good music and reflecting on a "job well done."

RSVP senior volunteers are also eligible to join with hundreds of other area-wide volunteers in the annual holiday goodwill party and also the annual RSVP Recognition Program and Banquet held each June with the support of a wide range of community businesses and cooperating agencies.



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TOY PROJEC

SECTION III

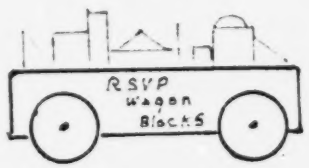
DESCRIPTIONS, DIAGRAMS AND DIMENSIONS

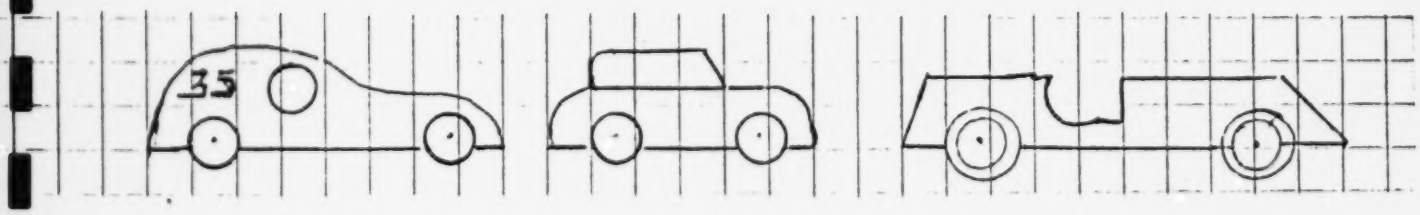
RSVP Basic Woodblocks and Other Easy Woodcrafted Toys

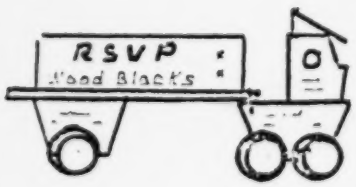
The RSVP woodblocks and several of the simple sports cars and toy wagons are the toy items most commonly used in the group sessions for diversely-abled volunteers.

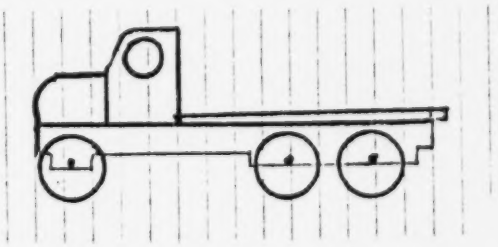
Other woodcrafted toys described here are often too complicated to decorate and assemble for persons with limited time and skill. These toys such as the trucks, pounding toy and mini-trains attract the interest of production unit volunteers and other hobby woodcrafters.

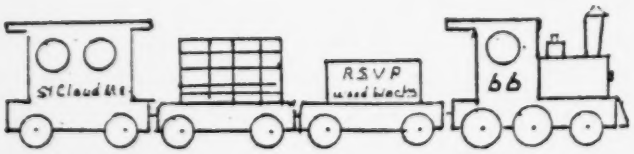
We have experimented with making up kits of these toys and having them available for "shut-in" volunteer workers and others who prefer to work for RSVP in their own homes. This new toy kit proposal has a lot of potential.

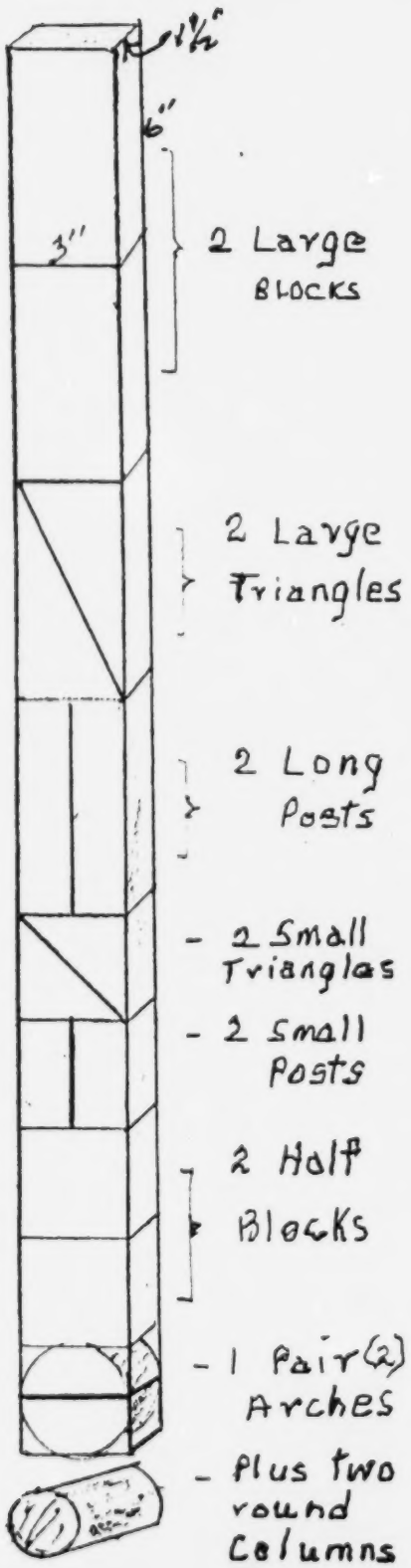












RSVP BASIC WOODBLOCKS

The sixteen-piece set of blocks pictured in the diagram at the left is the center-piece of the RSVP Woodblock Project.

Twenty-five volunteers who contribute two hours for eighteen group sessions each year add up a total of 900 volunteer hours.

Originally, our yearly goal of 100 sets of woodblocks was easily achieved. Now, with an experienced group of "old-timers" we find that 150 sets is achievable.

In addition, we can now complete at least 200 sports cars as a change of pace and as a motivator in the group sessions. Of course, our team-mates in the production group cut them out for us to sand and paint. Then--we suggest that they put on the wheels.

Dimensions

The basic large block shown here is 3" by 6" and it is cut from scrap 2 by 4's that are trimmed or planed to a 1 3/8th" or a 1 1/2" by 3" dimension.

It is easy then to use a radial-arm saw to whack off 650 of these large blocks.

Now, we set aside 200 large blocks for our 100 sets (two blocks of each kind per set) and cut up the remaining blocks into the other sizes and geometric shapes. A home-made "jig" with the fence on the band saw helps us get this job done.

SCHEDULE

Summer - cut out all your woodblocks to be ready for Fall.

Fall - handsand and paint blocks.

- production volunteers finish quality-control painting on blocks which you began with a year ago. Distribute it!

Winter - continue sanding and painting but alternate blocks with cars, etc.

- production volunteers cut and paint and assemble other toys.

Spring - finish handsanding and painting.

- take a summer vacation!

OTHER DIMENSIONS FOR WOODBLOCKS

The kind and quality of the scrap that you obtain will determine what variations you can make in the size of the woodblocks that you cut.

A local millwork factory donated some beautiful red oak scrap--so we began to make some 2" by 4" oak blocks, 3/4" thick. These were beautiful when stained and just fit 20 small blocks in a small wagon.

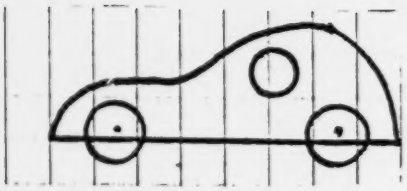
A maker of award plaques saved for us large quantities of scrap 1 1/16" white pine planed on all sides. This makes fine 2 1/2" by 5" woodblocks that sand and paint very easily. Also great wood for making cars and trucks!

CHECK OUT ALL YOUR LOCAL CABINET SHOPS AND MILLWORK FACTORIES FOR SCRAP LUMBER

SPORTS CARS

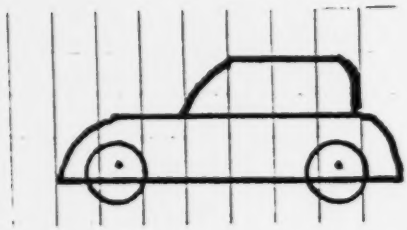
Four woodcrafted sports cars provide a pleasant alternative for group session volunteers. These are cut from 2 by 4's (except the small car cut from scrap oak and stained with Danish oil).

These four cars can also be cut out very nicely from the one-inch thick scrap pine boards.



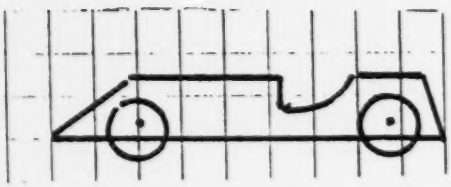
Sports Car
3" x 8"

- one piece body cut on band saw
- use 1/4" dowel for axles
- drill axle holes 5/16"
- use 1 1/2" wheels or 1" front and 1 1/2" in rear
- paint bright colors with contrasting wheels--decals or racing numbers on side add class.



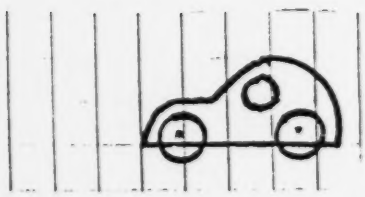
Taxi
3" x 8"

- two-piece body--glue top on chassis
- cut from scrap 2 by 4
- attach 1 1/2" wheels with screws
- paint like yellow taxi with black wheels or variations.



Racing Car
1 1/2" x 8 1/2" or 9"

- one-piece body cut on band saw
- cut from scrap 2 by 2 or larger
- wheels 1" or 1 1/2" or combination
- paint bright colors with contrasting wheels

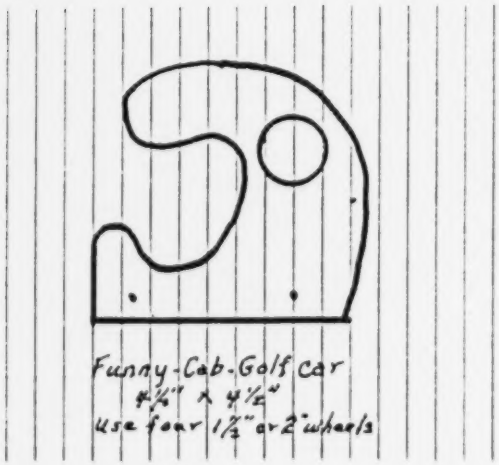


Mini-car
2" x 4 1/2"

- speedy mini-car cut from hardwood such as scrap oak from local millwork factories
- use 1" wheels cut with hole saw from 1/2" or 3/4" stock
- use 1/4" dowel axle with 5/16" hole
- classy looks with oak stain or Danish oil finish

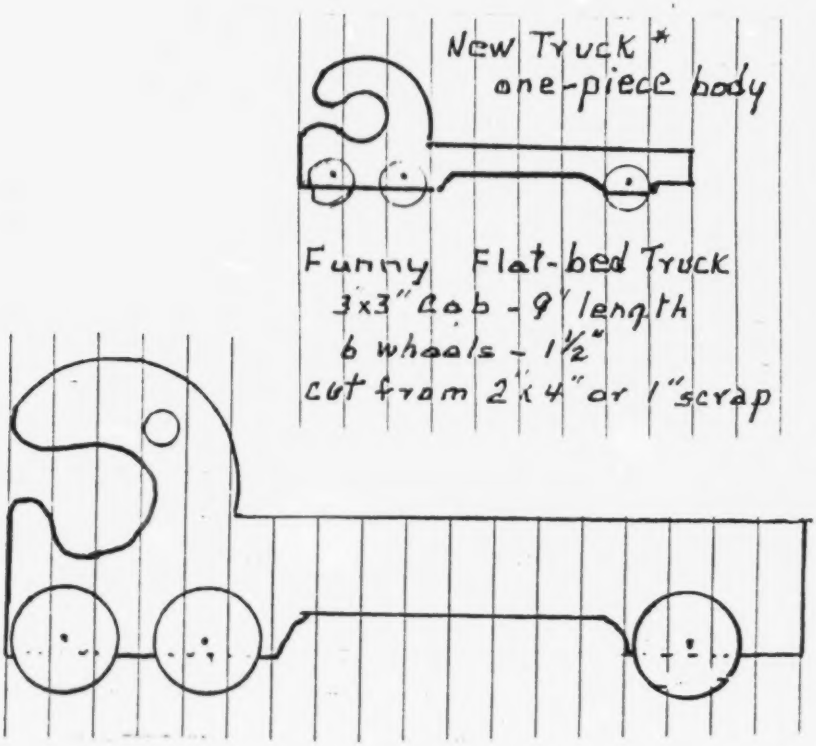
FUNNY CAR

This funny car was called a Flintstone's golf car by one of our volunteers. Whatever it may be--this contraption runs like a racing car and seldom tips over. It is 4 1/2" by 4 1/2" in actual size and can be drawn or cut out freehand to your own fancy on a band saw. Can be made from any thickness of scrap wood--it is versatile. Senior volunteers find it easy to make and to assemble. Try 2" wheels or a combination size with 1 1/2" wheels on the front and 2" wheels on the back. Be sure the axle holes for your 1/4" dowel are a full 5/16" to assure a fast moving vehicle. Paint this one imaginatively!



FUNNY FLAT-BED TRUCK

The great thing about this new idea for a small flat-bed truck--is its one-piece design. It is easy to cut out and fun to paint in different colors with contrasting colors for the six 1 1/2" wheels. This new truck helps to break the routine of sanding and painting woodblocks. Cut from full one-inch scrap or from 1 1/2" thick 2 by 4's.



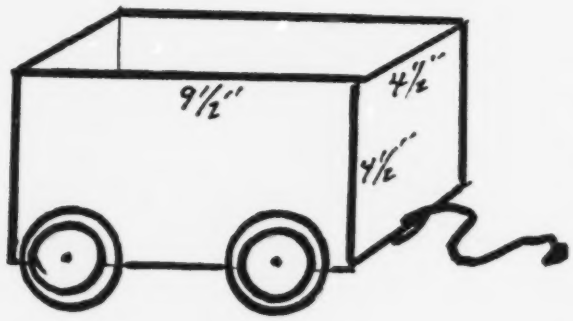
TOY WAGONS

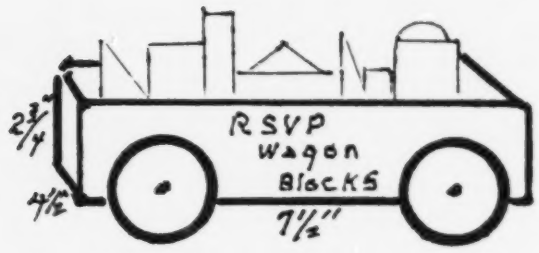
RSVP production unit volunteers design and build various toy items to accommodate blocks made in the group sessions. One useful idea that has been developed for the toy kits is the toy wagon in two different sizes.

As a variation for the cloth pouches, we have often used these toy wagons as a container for the wood blocks.

Dimensions for the large wagon are a bottom of 1/2" or 3/4" plywood that is 4 1/2" wide and 8 1/2" long. The 4 1/2" square ends of 1/4" paneling are attached first to this wagon base--then the 4 1/2" by 9 1/2" side panels are added so they overlap at the corners by 1/4". This makes for an easier fit.

Dimensions for the small wagon are a plywood bottom that measures 4 1/2" by 6 1/2". The two end panels are 4 1/2" wide and 2 3/4" high. Side panels are 2 3/4" high and 7 1/2" long--this allows side panels to overlap ends by 1/4" for neat fit.

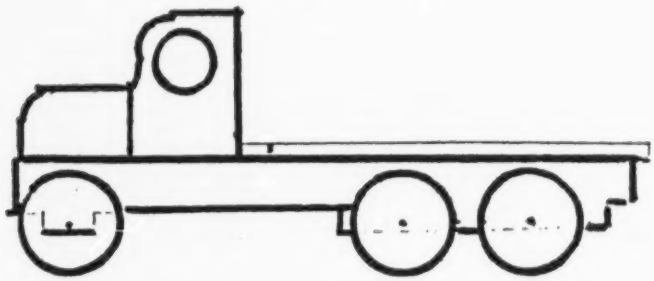


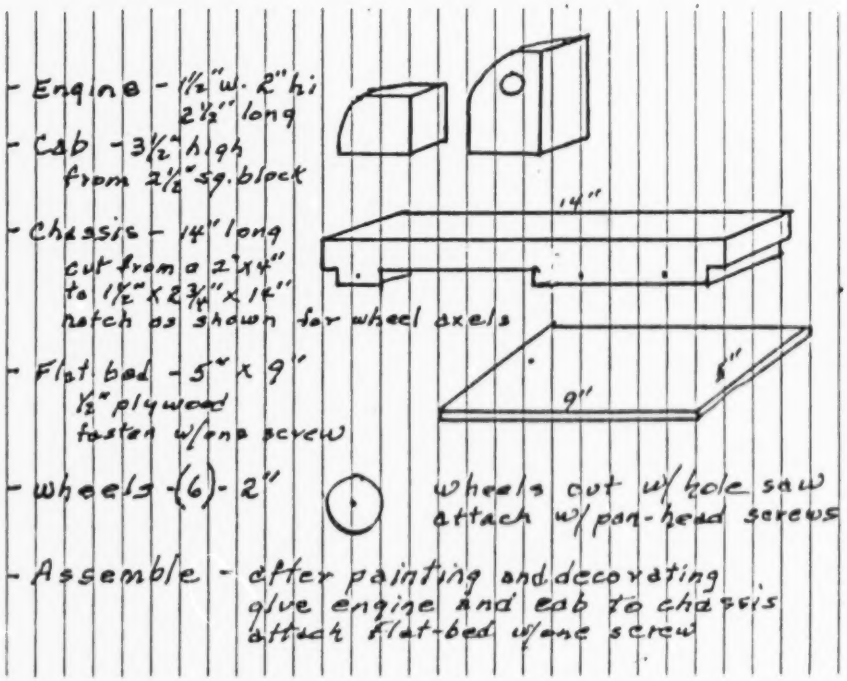


FLAT-BED TRUCK

This versatile flat-bed truck has only four basic parts--plus six 2" wheels. The 5" by 9" rear deck will carry a full wagon load of blocks.

Modifications can turn this flat-bed truck into a dump truck, a van, or even a tow truck.



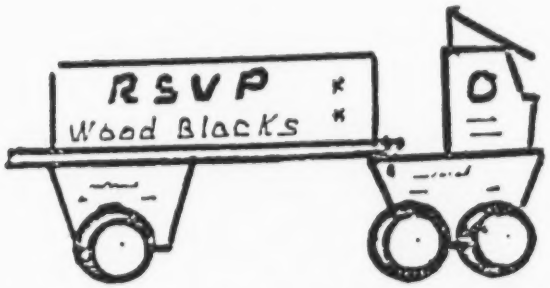

- Engine - 1½"w. 2"hi 2½" long
- Cab - 3½" high from 2½" sq. block
- Chassis - 14" long cut from a 2"x4" to 1½"x2¾"x14" notch as shown for wheel axels
- Flat bed - 5"x9" ½" plywood fasten w/one screw
- wheels - (6) - 2"
- Assemble - after painting and decorating give engine and cab to chassis attach flat-bed w/one screw
14"
5"
9"
wheels cut w/hole saw attach w/pan-head screws

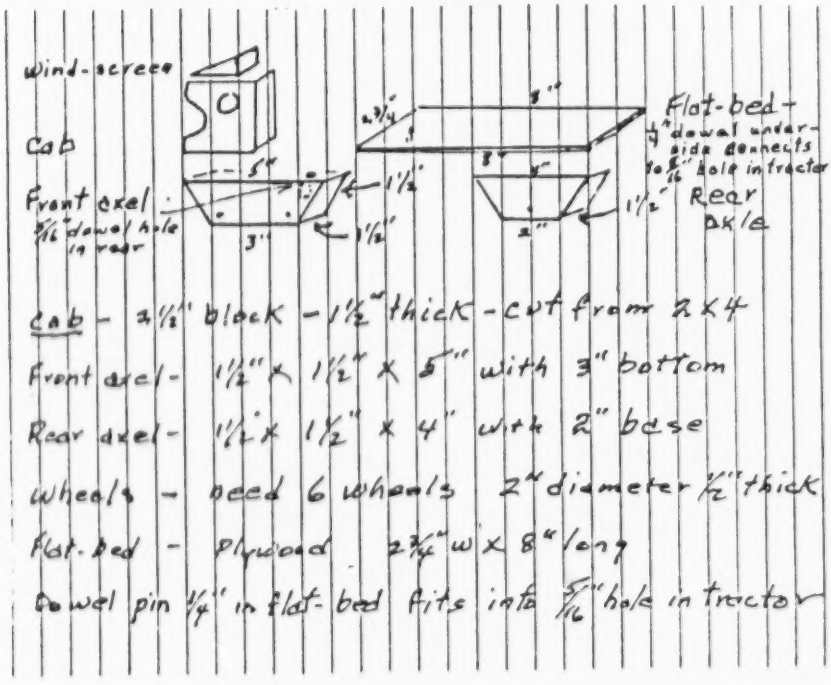
TRACTOR-TRAILER

This mid-size tractor-trailer has a useful flat-bed rear deck and runs approximately 12" long. It has many possible variations and lends itself to some fanciful decorating.

It requires six 2" wheels. The front tractor with four wheels can take off by itself while the flat-bed is parked.

The two chassis parts, the cab and wind screen are cut from scrap 2 by 4 on a band saw. Paint it colorfully.



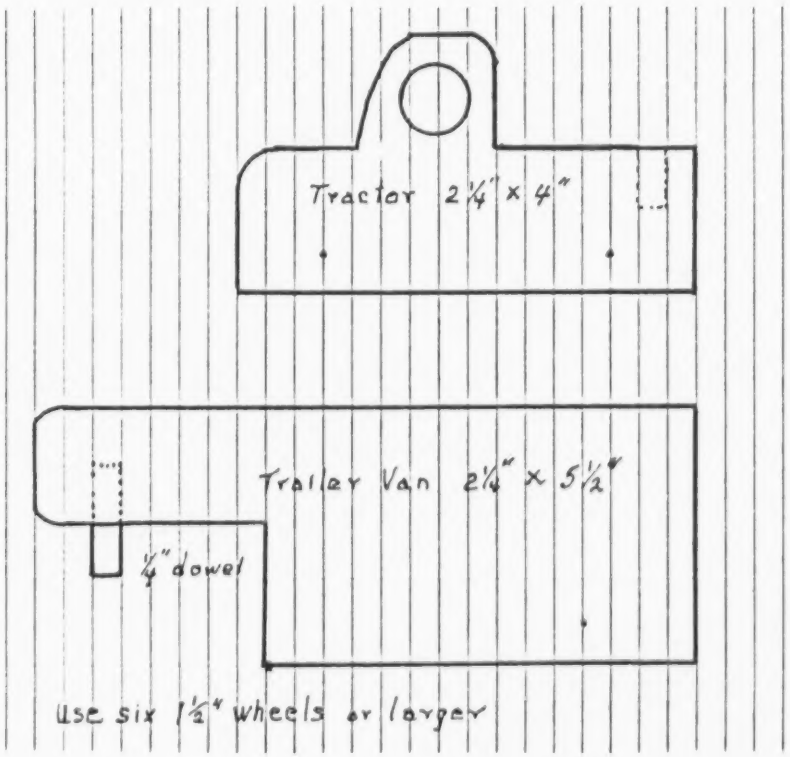

Wind-screen
Cab
Front axel
Flat-bed
Rear axle
Cab - 3½" block - 1½" thick - cut from 2x4
Front axel - 1½" x 1½" x 5" with 3" bottom
Rear axel - 1½" x 1½" x 4" with 2" base
Wheels - need 6 wheels 2" diameter ½" thick
Flat-bed - plywood 2¾" w x 8" long
Dowel pin ¼" in flat-bed fits into 5/16" hole in tractor

MINI-TRACTOR-TRAILER

This mini-tractor-trailer has only two main parts, a cab section with four wheels and a hitch-on van with two wheels. Overall it measures about 9" when assembled.

Cut from scrap oak boards this outfit looks good when stained with Danish oil. When cut from scrap pine boards, it lends itself to bright color paints and some fancy decorating.

With 1 1/2" wheels it can run fast and cut fancy corners.

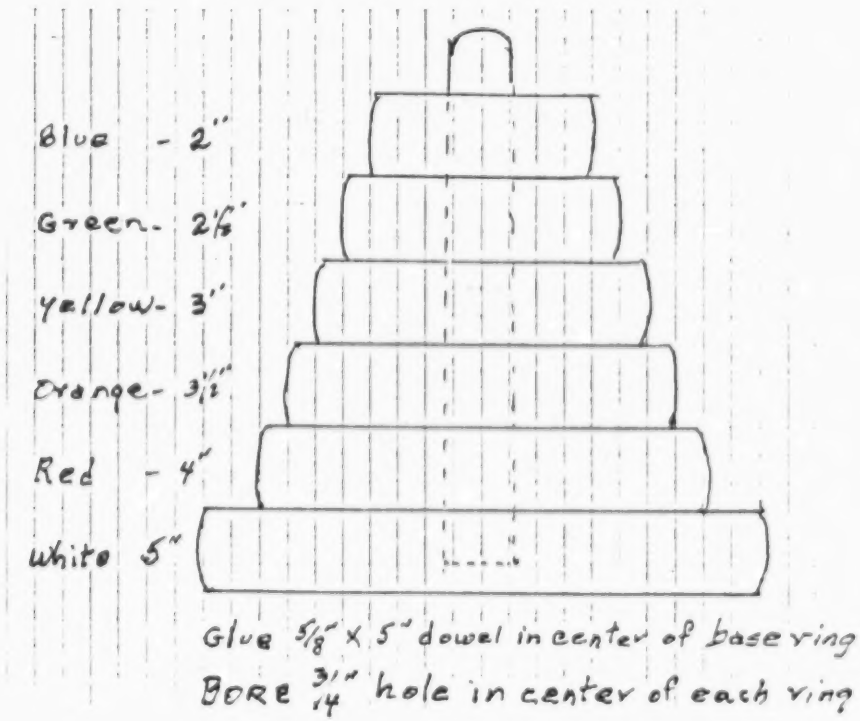


RAINBOW RING

The rainbow stacking ring is a great toy for real young kids learning eye-hand coordination. Be sure to use child-safe paints for the six different colors.

Cutting near perfect circles on band saw requires care and patience--but the disk sander helps to make them better. Suggest you cut square of wood in six different sizes first --then draw circles with compass--then drill 3/4" center holes before cutting the circles.

Center-post dowel glued into bottom base circle is 5/8" dowel. Rainbow colors are nice.



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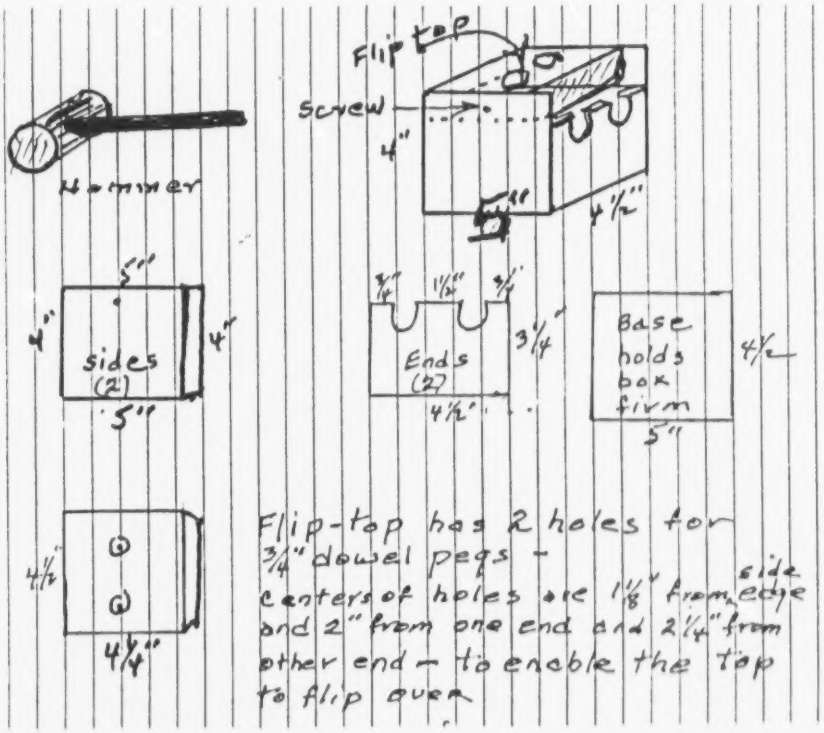
FLIP-FLOP POUNDING TOY

The flip-flop pounding toy has advantages over the old-fashioned bridge-shaped type with six pounding pegs that were so hard to make fit.

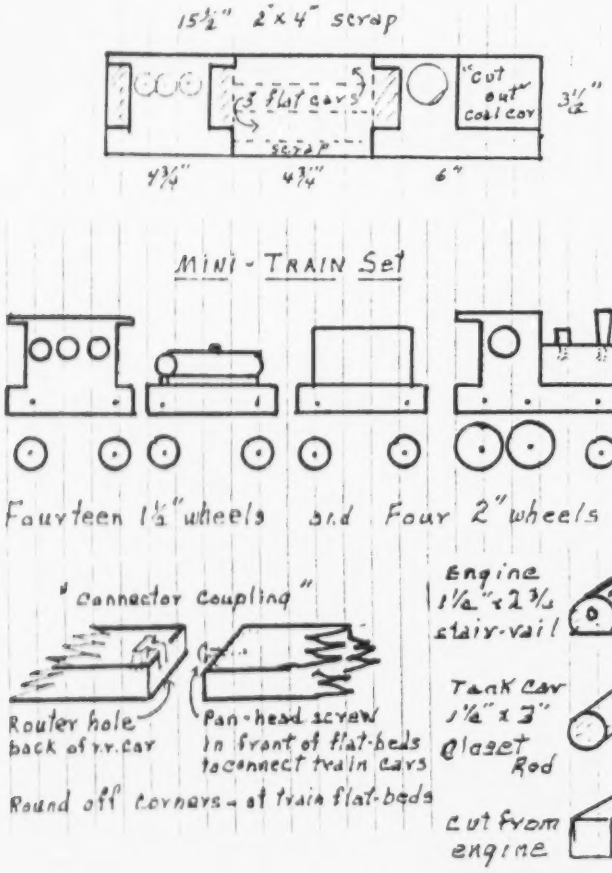
Make sure the flipping flip-top flips over to rest on the slotted sides to assure a solid pounding surface. Trial and error will help--that's how we figured it out.

Wood hammers are turned on lathe from 1 1/2" stair-rail and fitted with 3/4" dowel handles. Turn out a bunch of hammer heads at the same time 3" wide and cut them off with the band saw. Dowel pegs are 2 1/4" long with slotted ends that squeeze into the 3/4" holes.



DUGAN'S MINI-TRAIN**

Theoretically, this mini-train set could be cut from a 15 1/2" piece of scrap 2 by 4. However, it is easier to whack off the 6" and 4 3/4" blocks of wood on the band saw and then cut notches using a fence on bandsaw. Save cut-out block from locomotive for coal car box. Cut closet pole for tank car and raise if desired on one of the flat cars. Short dowel on top adds to detail. Find 1 1/2" stair rail for locomotive and add dowel or special stack and bell from craft store for classic detail.



**Train designed December 1, 1991 by Bill Dugan

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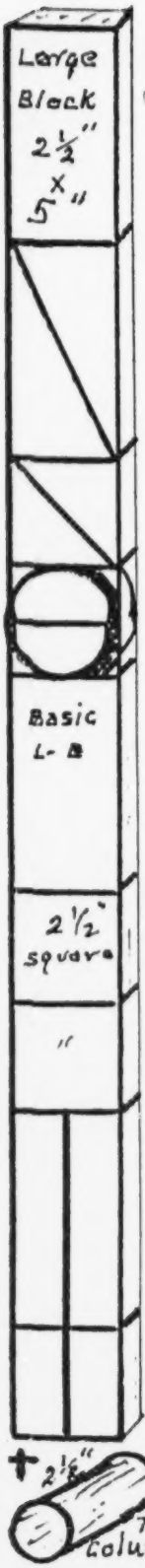
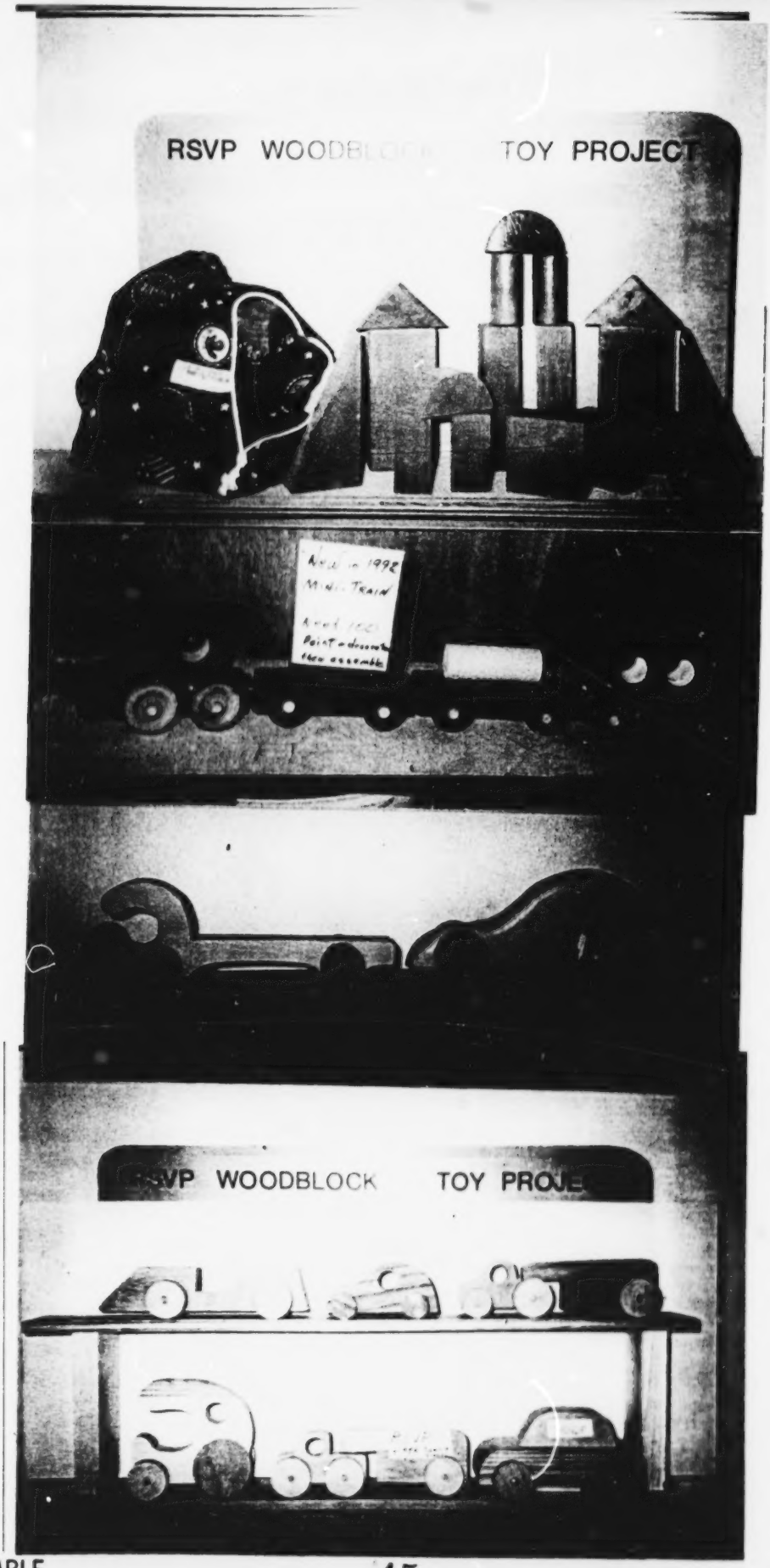

Large
Block
2½"
5" x 11"
Basic
L- B
2½"
square
"
2½"
Two
Columns

APPENDIX

St Cloud
Minnesota
RSVP
88
44



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38
38

47

48

Production Unit Volunteers

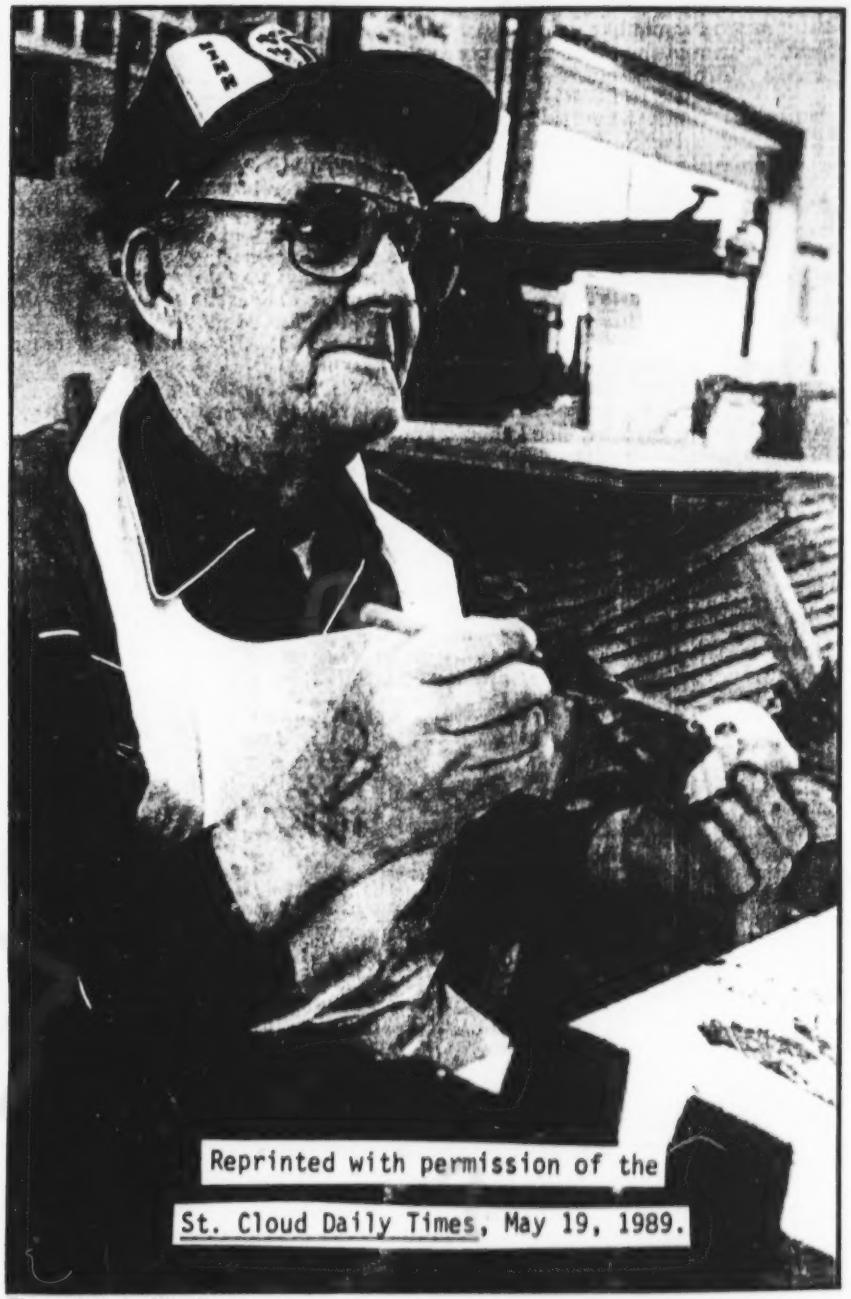
Production Unit Volunteers

36

51

Group Session Volunteers

52



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St. Cloud Daily Times, May 19, 1989.

Times photo by Mike Knaak

Volunteer Jerry Orcutt painted pieces of a wood block toy set at Whitney Senior Center's woodworking shop.

Wood crafters work wonders

Seniors give program special touch

By TOM LARSON
Times Staff Writer

Many woodworkers, especially the old-timers who shun the sophisticated tools, would be lying if they said they liked sanding.

To these older guys, when the woodblock and the sheets of 150-grade sandpaper come out, so do tedium and the tube of Ben Gay.

But others bear the monotony and muscle aches for the simple joy of slowly turning a rough piece of wood into a smooth, useful shape. Their immediate pleasure comes from anticipating the grand result.

The seniors and developmentally disabled volunteers in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program's woodworking program would fall into the second category.

Since 1979, RSVP has sponsored the program at Whitney Senior Center's woodworking shop to get seniors involved in meaningful work in the community.

For two hours twice a month, about 20 seniors and developmentally disabled adults from area care centers and nursing homes sand and paint pre-cut toy block sets. The Women's Guild gives the finished sets to disadvantaged children at Christmas, said Silvia Romanish, director of RSVP in the greater St. Cloud area.

Around a table in the Whitney woodshop, about a dozen volunteers from RSVP and the WACOSA program for developmentally disabled seniors hunch over various shapes of blocks, intently sanding edges and applying coats of red paint.

Bill Dugan, project coordinator, and his wife, Hazel, bounce from table to table, keeping an eye on the volunteers' progress.

Jerry Orcutt, 72, a resident at St. Cloud Manor, and two friends meticulously dab paint on triangular and half-circle shapes before delicately stacking them to dry.

Orcutt said the work is a good way for him to "get back on my feet" after recently spending months in the hospital recovering from an aneurysm in his stomach. His return to the Whitney workbench also marks his return to a craft he has dabbled in his entire life.

> "It gives them the opportunity to get out in the community a couple times a month, to get involved, and know their work is going to needy kids."
>
> **— Steve Hennes,**
> Whitney Senior Center program coordinator

"I took up woodworking in school and I kept on horsing around with it," Orcutt said. "I got the idea I liked to do it. After I retired, I kept on making stuff."

Orcutt has donated much of his "stuff" — wooden planters shaped like deer, moose and giraffes, and baskets — to St. Cloud Manor.

Another St. Cloud Manor resident and Orcutt's painting partner, Leander Winter, 83, joined in on the project four years ago when he moved to the Manor. He said the program is one way he is able to get out and about after poor circulation caused him to lose the use of his legs.

Dugan, 80, former chairman of the University of Minnesota's educational psychology department, said the number of block designs has been increased and the work varied to help keep things interesting.

The volunteers now work on 14 blocks of seven different shapes for each set. Hazel Dugan, 80, uses donated material to sew cinch pouches to carry the blocks. The volunteers also work on hammers and pegs for pounding-board games.

"Bill (Dugan's) the man behind it all," said Steve Hennes, program coordinator for Whitney, who says the program might be the only one of its kind in the country. "It's really a family affair. It gives them the opportunity to get out in the community a couple times a month, to get involved, and know their work is going to needy kids."

Toy donations to help 2,711 local children

By JOHN DuBOIS
Times Staff Writer

A lot of Santas make their home in St. Cloud.

That is, if you define a Santa as someone who makes kids' Christmases happy.

And there will be a lot of happy kids in St. Cloud this Christmas — 2,711 of them.

That's how many kids will get toys that were donated to Women's Guild and Salvation Army this year.

What kind of toys? Handmade wooden toys from the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, for example. And, donated toys — old and new.

"I saw two fishing rods in there," says Vanessa Sjobeck, the Army's director of social services.

Women's Guild gives away its donated toys to moms and dads who have signed up today. Each of 2,000 kids will get one toy, says Joyce Stock, coordinator of the Guild.

In addition, the Guild will have a pair of donated mittens for each of those kids.

Salvation Army's distribution to parents who have signed up is Thursday. Each of 711 kids will get three toys, Sjobeck says.

In addition, the Army will have food baskets for 410 households.

Local seniors helping Santa

Whitney's wood workers building Christmas toys

By JOHN DuBOIS
Times Staff Writer

Would you believe Santa has a workshop in St. Cloud?

Yeah, it's at Whitney Senior Center.

Just Tuesday, workers were busy sanding and painting wood toys for next Christmas.

Meanwhile, other workers boxed and loaded finished wood toys for this Christmas.

"Yeah, we're helping Santa," whistles Glen Orten, 90, a resident of Good Shepherd Nursing Home.

That they were. The boxed blocks, cars, trucks and trains were to be delivered to the Salvation Army and the Women's Guild.

And from there, they go to needy kids.

But the seniors also were helping themselves. This is a Retired Senior Volunteer Program project.

The idea is not only to help Santa. It's also to get seniors living in nursing homes out and about.

Thirty volunteers from Good Shepherd, St. Cloud Manor and Wacosa Day Center spent 900 hours over the last year in Whitney's wood shop.

With their help sanding and priming, about 30 more senior volunteers were able to churn out a record 585 toys this year.

"And wait 'til next year," winks Bill Dugan, 82, a volunteer who is recognized as the project's leader. It'll be bigger than ever, he promises.

It started on a much smaller scale about a dozen years ago, recalls Silvia Romanish, RSVP director.

The seniors only made wood block sets back then. And the toys went to a day-care lending library.

But then, Dugan came along, Romanish says. All of a sudden the seniors were not only making blocks, but fancy wood sports cars, farm wagons and, next year, a Flinstone golf car.

And in huge quantities. This year's output includes 222 sports cars, 24 farm wagons, six flat-bed trucks, 42 stacking ring toys and 50 spin tops.

"These might be the only toys that some kids get this year," Dugan says.

Work already has begun on next year's batch. The seniors, some of whom are developmentally disabled, are bused to Whitney twice a month — except in the summertime, when it's too hot.

Times photo by Chuck Kimmerle

Sylvester Hemke, a resident of St. Cloud Manor nursing home, sanded the corners of a block Tuesday at the Whitney Senior Center wood shop.

No, this workshop doesn't have air conditioning.

In between the nuring home residents' visits, seniors skilled in woodworking design, cut and assemble the toys. Other seniors sew pouches for the wood blocks and still others apply a final coat of paint.

"They're a little rough," says Orten, a retired prison guard, comparing the final product to today's commercial toys.

"They're like the toys I got as a kid. They were mostly handmade back then."

Just like the stuff that comes from Santa's workshop.

Reprinted with permission of the

St. Cloud Daily Times, December 18, 1991.

St. Cloud (Minn.) Times / **Sat., Dec. 12, 1992**

Halos & pitchforks

Halos from Bill Dugan, Retired Senior Volunteer Program supervisor of the Woodblock and Toy Project at Whitney Senior Center, to the 60 or more senior volunteers "who devoted nearly 2,000 hours" at the center's woodshop this past year cutting out and painting over 500 sets of woodcrafted toys, cars, trucks, wagons and sets of blocks for distribution to needy children this Christmas season. Dugan also extended special thanks to:

- Activity supervisors at Good Shepherd, Waite Park, Talahi and Wacosa Care Centers who transported their RSVP volunteer workers to 18 work sessions at the woodshop.
- The "hard working production volunteers who cut scrap wood into beautiful blocks and toy parts to be sanded and painted by RSVP volunteers who are frail and often in wheelchairs, but have the interest and skill to help create something useful for other persons."

Good Work!

■■

Jeanne Erickson from Association for Retarded Citizens of St. Cloud (ARC), sent **halos** to the following for making their Dec. 7 Christmas party "bigger and better than ever": Cash Wise, Cub Foods, Cinema Arts, McDonald's, Retired Senior Volunteer Program wooden block and toy project, Burger King, Lane Erickson, Rose Moriarty, and Duane and Bonnie Lahr. Erickson added thanks to the Project Challenge Singers; Jim Gammel (their Santa); Kevin Quinn; and Sue, Becky and Mandy Arnold from St. Cloud School of Dance for the "great" entertainment.

■■

On behalf of Reach-Up/Head Start, Executive Director Jeannette Bineham sent **halos** to the Retired Senior Volunteer Wood Block and Toy Project, supervised by Bill Dugan. The RSVP group constructed bright red blocks for the Head Start children in Benton, Stearns and Sherburne counties, Bineham wrote. "Thank you for thinking of these children and families. The surprise of receiving handmade toys brings lots of fun."

■■

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

To: RSVP Toy Project

From: Mayor Chuck Winkelman

Great work
- Thanks
Chuck

MANUAL AVAILABLE
FOR
WOODBLOCK AND TOY PROJECT

A practical manual describing the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) project conducted at the Whitney Senior Center woodshop in St. Cloud, Minnesota has been written by the volunteer supervisor of this unique outreach program for diversely-abled senior persons.

Those who wish to initiate a similar project in their communities are now able to request a copy of this "how-to" publication. The descriptive context, photographs and scale drawings clearly depict how this program operates.

Section I describes how the project is organized to serve a wide range of skills and interests among differently abled and often frail senior volunteers from nursing homes and day centers. Group activity sessions for persons with minimal skills and supportive woodcraft activities of other production unit volunteers before and after the group sessions are described in detail.

Section II deals with practical operational matters such as: how to finance the project; how and where to obtain free lumber; how to package the sixteen painted woodblocks; rewards and satisfactions gained by volunteers; plus other helpful ideas.

Section III defines in graphic diagrams and descriptions how the woodblock sets and simple one-piece woodcrafted toys are produced. Photographs of completed materials ready for distribution to community agencies and children's centers are included.

Copies of this Manual are available to interested persons and can be obtained by completing the attached order form.

I hereby order _____ copies of the RSVP Woodblock and Toy Project Manual at

$10.00 per copy including shipping and handling costs.

Total amount with this order $_____.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE:_____ ZIP CODE: _____

Make Checks Payable to: RSVP Woodblock and Toy Project

And Mail to: RSVP
400 2nd Street South
St. Cloud, MN 56301

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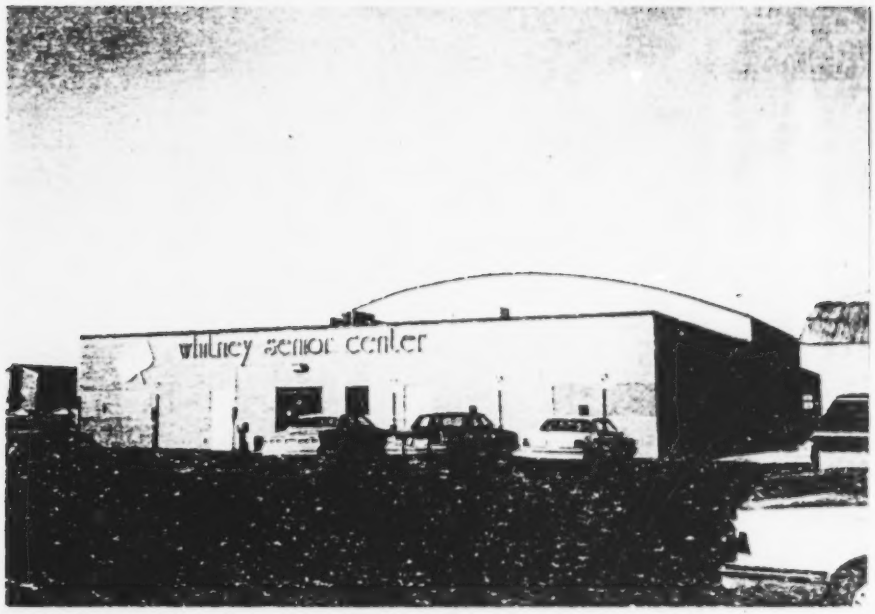

About the author . . .

Willis E. Dugan is a retired former Professor of Educational Psychology and Director of Counselor Education, NDEA Institutes at the University of Minnesota. Now, as an active eighty-three year old RSVP volunteer, he supervises the Woodblock and Toy Project at the Whitney Senior Center. He is past-president and executive-director emeritus of a national professional society of counselors and human development specialists. His wife, Hazel, participates also as a volunteer in producing the cloth draw-string pouches used in the project.

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